

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL THURSDAY
AUGUST 5 HEADED "IRAN AND THE ARMS TRADE."

2. PRESIDENT NIXON'S DECISION TO ARM IRAN WAS CHARACTERISTIC
OF MUCH OF HIS DIPLOMACY. IT WAS SECRETIVE. ITS DISMAYING
APPLICATIONS WERE NEVER DEBATED WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION,
LET ALONE IN PUBLIC. IT HAS NOW LEFT THE COUNTRY WITH AN
IMPLICIT COMMITMENT THAT AMERICANS CANNOT ACCEPT--AND YET
CANNOT EASILY REJECT. CONDEMNING THIS KIND OF HIGH-HANDED
AND IRRESPONSIBLE STATECRAFT IS SIMPLE ENOUGH. BUT WORKING
OUT A REMEDY IS GOING TO BE AS DIFFICULT AS IT IS URGENT.

3. THE DIMENSIONS OF THIS DILEMMA ARE BECOMING PAINFULLY
CLEAR. IRAN IS NOW THIS COUNTRY'S BIGGEST CUSTOMER FOR
ARMS, BUYING INORDINATE AMOUNTS OF THE MOST ADVANCED AND
COMPLEX WEAPONRY. IRAN, AS A NATION AND A PEOPLE, DOES NOT
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HAVE THE TECHNOLOGICAL BASE FOR THIS KIND OF AN ARMORY.

KEEPING IT IN OPERATION REQUIRES AMERICANS, IN LARGE AND CONSPICUOUS NUMBERS, ON THE AIRFIELD AND IN THE MAINTENANCE SHOPS.

4. IF THE SHAH WERE TO USE THIS EQUIPMENT IN WAR, THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE FACED WITH A FEARFUL CHOICE. TO LEAVE THE AMERICAN TECHNICIANS AND EXPERTS IN PLACE WOULD MAKE THIS COUNTRY AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE SHAH'S PURPOSES. BUT SUDDENLY TO WITHDRAW TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND RESUPPLY WOULD RISK THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL U.S. RELATIONS WITH IRAN WITH OBVIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE FLOW OF PERSIAN GULF OIL ON WHICH THIS COUNTRY IS INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT.

5. THE TIME TO CONSIDER THIS UNPLEASANT PROSPECT IS BEFORE, NOT AFTER, THE SHAH BEGINS TO USE THIS EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS SOLD HIM. BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION HAS THOUGHT ABOUT IT MUCH, OR HAS ANY POLICY AT ALL. PERHAPS THE PROCESS OF LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER WILL BE ACCELERATED BY THE PUBLICATION LAST MONDAY OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE'S STAFF REPORT ON THE MILITARY SALES TO IRAN. THE RISING DANGER TO AMERICAN INTERESTS HAS BEEN APPARENT, IN GENERAL TERMS, FOR SOME TIME. BUT THIS REPORT LAYS OUT THE CASE WITH A WEALTH OF DETAIL DIFFICULT TO IGNORE.

6. AN EXAMPLE: THE REPORT NOTES THAT THIS COUNTRY HAS SOLD IRAN WEAPONS THAT INCLUDE THE NEW F-14 TOMCAT FIGHTER AND THE SPRUANCE CLASS DESTROYER. "THE F-14 SYSTEM IS SO COMPLICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES NAVY IS HAVING DIFFICULTY KEEPING IT OPERATIONAL; IRAN'S SPRUANCE CLASS DESTROYER WILL BE EVEN MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN THOSE BEING PROCURED BY THE U.S. NAVY," THIS REPORT OBSERVES. IT THEN ADDS: "THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG U.S. PERSONNEL INVOLVED WITH THE IRANIAN PROGRAMS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT IRAN COULD GO TO WAR IN THE NEXT FIVE TO 10 YEARS WITH ITS CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE INVENTORY...WITHOUT U.S. SUPPORT ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS." CAN IRAN COUNT ON THAT SUPPORT? THE SHAH IS ENTITLED TO AN ANSWER. SO ARE AMERICAN VOTERS.

7. AFTER A VENTURE IN PERSONAL DIPLOMACY IN TEHERAN IN
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EARLY 1972, MR. NIXON TOLD HIS SUBORDINATES THAT THE SHAH WAS TO BE PERMITTED TO BUY VIRTUALLY ANY WEAPON SHORT OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS. BECAUSE OF THE SWEEPING AND EXPLICIT NATURE OF THIS ORDER, ALL OF THE NORMAL PROCESSES OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS WERE ABROGATED. THE ONLY LIMITING FACTOR WAS IRAN'S ABILITY TO PAY. BUT THEN CAME THE OIL REVOLUTION. IRAN'S OIL REVENUES IN THE YEAR OF MR. NIXON'S VISIT WERE A LITTLE OVER \$2 BILLION; BY 1974, THEY WERE UP TO \$17.4

BILLION, AND AMERICAN ARMS SALES TO IRAN WERE UP TO NEARLY \$4 BILLION A YEAR. BUT BY THEN THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION, SUNK DEEP IN THE WATERGATE SCANDALS, HAD NO ATTENTION TO SPARE FOR MARGINAL MATTERS LIKE ARMS POLICY. THE LOWER RANKS OF OFFICIALDOM HERE IN WASHINGTON LET THE SALES RUSH FORWARD, MINDLESSLY AND AUTOMATICALLY.

8. IRAN IS AT THE CENTER OF A NOTORIOUSLY INSTABLE REGION IN WHICH NATIONAL ENMITIES ARE SHARP AND NATIONAL AMBITIONS, NOURISHED BY A NEW ECONOMIC POWER, RUN HIGH. THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT NOTES THAT THE SHAH IS DEVELOPING CLOSE MILITARY RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN, WHICH, OF COURSE, IS MORE OR LESS CONTINUOUSLY EMBROILED WITH INDIA. INDIA HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IRAN, BY THE WAY, IS NEGOTIATING FOR AMERICAN REACTORS--FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, EVERYONE SAYS.

9. BY COINCIDENCE, SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER ARRIVES TONIGHT IN TEHERAN FOR TWO DAYS OF CONVERSATIONS. THERE IS NO SUBJECT BEFORE THE TWO GOVERNMENTS SO PRESSING AS THIS ARMS SPIRAL. MR. KISSINGER NEEDS TO DISCUSS WITH THE SHAH THE MEANS TO LIMIT AND REDUCE THE FLOW OF WEAPONS. ABOVE ALL, HE HAS AN OBLIGATION TO TELL BOTH THE SHAH AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC UNDER PRECISELY WHAT CONDITIONS IRAN WILL GET AMERICAN SUPPORT IF THOSE F-14S ARE USED IN COMBAT. (END TEXT.) HABIB

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